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Small-Scale Agriculture Today

Office For Small-Scale Agriculture

WINTER 1989

Alternative Opportunities For U.S. Farmers

AT ISSUE...IMPORTANT POINTS

Small is not small. This contradiction is important particularly so today, especially to small-scale agriculture which implies people utilizing alternative systems to attain gainful employment. Small-scale agriculture, sometimes referred to as "small farms", constitutes a significant number of the Nation's 2.2 million farms. Farms grossing less than \$40,000 annually are defined as "small," and more than 7 out of 10 U.S. farms fit into this category.

Awareness is growing that small-scale farmers make a significant contribution to the economic development of both agribusiness and consumer industries of rural communities throughout the United States. Some compare these people to the mortar which binds rural communities with social and economic strengths.

The important point: small-scale farming is a business with a bottom line. Profit is what counts.

There is an additional special segment of the population which both contributes to and utilizes a wide spectrum of agricultural information: the hobby farmer, who is not profit motivated but farms to be close to nature and for relaxation. It is estimated that more than 60 million families living in America engage in some form of agriculture, for example, lawn, flowers, and back-yard gardens, as a hobby.

The important point: in many instances the hobby farmer ultimately becomes a small-scale agricultural entrepreneur and farms for profit.

Thus, today more than ever, small is not only small, it is very important!

TOPICS AND TECHNOLOGY

TIP: 1988 TAX Information - Farmers can get IRS Publication 225, Farmer's Tax Guide by calling toll-free 1-800-424-3676.

Freeflowing Water in Winter - For farm and home water supplies, two pamphlets, provide information and specifications about a new system which uses a heating cable inside the water pipe. "Inpipe Heating Cable - For Winter Use of Your Water Supply" and "Pyrotenax Cable: Farm Applications." Contact - IHPC, Pyrotenax USA Inc., 6501 Basile Row, East Syracuse, NY 13057. Telephone 1-800-234-6501.

Ginseng Scarce - "Ginseng will be soft and very expensive. This includes cultivated American ginseng roots. The yield has been poor this year (1988), due to lack of moisture. In addition, there has been virtually no ginseng seed crop for future planting next year." (HerbalGram, Summer 1988).

Three-In-One-Valve - A shut-off, filter and backflushing valve combined into one compact unit for use in orchards, vineyards, nurseries, gardens and landscaping. Important: it is not approved for domestic or hot water use! Contact - Remco Research and Development, 405-114th Ave. S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98004. Telephone (206) 453-5410.

Mosquito Biological Control - Mosquito fish (*Gramusia affinis*) are being raised by the Maryland Department of Agriculture for a stock population to be used in populating dredge spoil areas to control mosquito larvae. Contact - Kevin J. Sweeney, Maryland Department of Agriculture, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401. Telephone (301) 841-5928.

Herb Video - If you are interested in foraging for wild plants, the 60 minute VHS video, "Edible Wild Plants" will help you to recognize and find herbs. Provides information on sources for plant propagation, folk uses and culture. Costs \$20.95 ppd. alone or \$25.95 ppd. with the companion "Field Guide" (Note: IN residents add 5% Tax). Contact Laura Clavio, The Seeker Press, P.O. Box 299, Battle Grove, IN 47920. Telephone (317) 567-2884.

Market Kiosk - A quarterly trade association newsletter from Washington State Farmers' Market Association (WSFMA). As a WSFMA Associate Member (\$10 per year), you will receive a subscription to Market Kiosk, the quarterly newsletter, free admission to all WSFMA events and workshops, plus "I Love Market Farmers" lapel button. Contact - WSFMA, 11910 - C Meridian E, Suite 29, Puyallup, WA 98373. Telephone (206) 876-0717.

Rural Handicrafts - Catalogs bring products to potential customers far distant from the workshop of a skilled artisan. Two very good catalogs are Best of Missouri's Hands, send \$11.95; and Best of Missouri Farms, send \$4.19, to 628 Clark Hall, Drawer 22, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211.

White Shiitake Mushrooms - The Japan Mushroom Center in Tottoti, Japan recently announced that it has developed a white shiitake mushroom. They said that the new white variety is equal in taste, appearance and size to the regular brown variety. For other good information, see the "Mushrooms: Special Section", (Produce News, November 12, 1988, pp 13-18).

TIP: Gift Guide - When is a gift merely a gift? When does it qualify you for a charitable deduction? You can find the answer in Arthur Anderson's Tax Economics of Charitable Giving, which includes IRS code citations. Free and available from any Anderson office, or call (312) 507-7079. (Business Week, November 7, 1988, p 191).

Hot Peppers - Carolina Cayenne is endowed with resistance to the southern root knot nematode and retains its commercially desirable red color when dehydrated. This hot pepper is a very popular crop for some small-scale farmers. Contact - Philip P. Dukes, USDA-ARS Vegetable Laboratory, 2875 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC 29414. Telephone (803) 556-0840.

1988 Illinois Small Fruit Proceedings - Cultural and variety information on blueberries, thorny blackberries, thornless blackberries, table grapes and raspberries plus additional ideas and recommendations. Costs \$5 payable to University of Illinois. Contact - J.R. Courter, University of IL, Dixon Springs Agricultural Center, Simpson, IL 62985. Telephone (618) 695-2444.

Farming Alternatives - A Guide to Evaluating the Feasibility of New Farm - Based Enterprises, (Small Farm Series). The cost is \$5.75. Contact - Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service (NRAES) 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853. Telephone (607) 255-7654.

Ranch Dog Trainer - A quarterly publication dedicated to farmers and ranchers who use the stockdog as a livestock - handling tool. Subscription rate is \$10 per year. Stonehedge Publishing Co. Inc., Rt 1, Box 21, Koshkonong, MO 65692.

Computer Software - PASTURE lets farmers project various management scenarios and see what happens to costs and returns. Software for PASTURE is available to extension agents. Contact - M. A. Brown, USDA-ARS South Central Family Farm Research Center, Rt 2, Box 144-A, Booneville, AR 72927-9214. Telephone (501) 675-3834.

All-terrain Vehicle (ATV) - For information about ATV safety, call Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 or the ATV distributors safety hotline at 1-800-852-5344.

Old Tractors - They are both fascinating and for many small scale farmers very useful! Want to know more about various tractor publications? Send self addressed stamped envelope to Gerard W. Rinaldi, 154 Blackwood Lane, Stamford, CN 06903. Telephone (203) 322-7283.

TIP: Jump-Starting - The greatest potential danger from jump-starting a vehicle is the battery explosion. It is very important to connect jumper cables in the following order: (1) Positive terminal of dead battery, connect to (2) Positive terminal of good battery (3) Negative terminal of good battery, connect to (4) Engine block of stalled vehicle, away from battery. Remove cables in the opposite order (from 4 though 1).

Vegetable Production Handbook - Circular 1241 for fresh market growers. The price is \$4 payable to the University of Illinois, College of Agriculture - Ag. Publications, 1301 W. Gregory Drive, Urbana, IL 61801. Telephone (217) 333-2007.

Directory of Specialists - The directory of specialists contains the names, addresses, activities, and telephone numbers of individuals in colleges and industries across the U.S. that have an interest in herbs. Copies of the booklet can be purchased at a cost of \$6 each. Write to the Herb, Spice, and Medicinal Plant Digest, Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, Stockbridge Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003. Telephone (413) 545-2347.

Peach Orchard Management System - Peach trees planted in shallow trenches lined with stiff polyester fabric (used to hold tar and gravel on flat roofs) can reach maximum production in almost half the time required for trees planted in the

traditional manner. One drawback: the system requires irrigation! Contact - D.C. Coston, Agriculture Experiment Station 104 Barre Hall, Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29631. Telephone (803) 656-3140.

TIP: Trees and Fire - After being ravaged by fire, a forest left on its own may generate several thousands seedlings on one acre. However, only about 2 percent of those trees will grow to maturity in 60 to 100 years.

(Mention of commercial enterprises or brand name does not constitute endorsement or imply preference by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

SMALL FARMERS NEED FRIENDS

The Office for Small-Scale Agriculture participated in the 122nd annual convention of the National Grange in Redding, CA, November 14-20. The Grange, the country's only fraternal farm and rural community service organization, has 4500 local chapters and a membership of 365,000.

In remarks addressed to the group, Howard ("Bud") Kerr, office director, stated that most politicians focus on the 30% of the nation's farmers who produce all but one-tenth of US agricultural output. Kerr noted, however, that small farmers, comprising the other 70% of the nation's farmers, suffer from the same limited resource problems as large farmers and also need to have attention paid to their concerns.

Kerr also gave the group a brief history of his office. Created by Secretary of Agriculture Richard Lyng in 1986, the office specifically addresses the needs of small farmers. The office has five current programs that meet the needs of small scale agriculture which include a newsletter, a survey of all 36,000 agricultural research programs to determine which could be adapted to better serve small farmers, participation in conferences on small farms, preparing fact sheets and compiling a national directory on small-scale agriculture. (From Rural America, National Grange, Washington, D.C., November 16, 1988).

WHAT FUTURE FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE? The current situation in some agricultural markets entails stagnating profits for many farmers and their families. The existence of agricultural enterprises cannot be secured by the production of food alone. This affects in particular many small-scale and medium-sized farms in Europe (and the U.S.) which have to farm in less-favored areas and live in structurally weak regions. Therefore, we have to think about possibilities on how to secure and/or improve the income of these families.

The Council of Europe launched its European Campaign for the Countryside at Santarem, Portugal on June 12, 1987, to run until the end of 1988, in order to draw attention to the problems of the rural world. In the last twenty years, more and more young Europeans prefer to settle or remain in the country, as an alternative to the unemployed and imper-

sonality of the city, reversing the apparently inexorable rural exodus.

Relative to these concerns, the Office for Small-Scale Agriculture participated in the September 14-19 conference, "Multiple Job-holding Amongst Farming Families", held in Bad Hersfeld (Federal Republic of Germany). Plurality enables rural areas to stabilize or to increase their incomes. During the past few years, various forms of multiple job holding have been devised and put in use in Bad Hersfeld, a town in a region of the State of Hesse, where about 70 percent of farming families engage in multiple job holding -- part-time farming.

Of interest were the non agricultural jobs available in forestry for some farm operators who owned draft horses. In 1974, the operator (farmer) assumed a job as a wood hauler with the National Forestry Administration. Since 1983, two hauling horses have been used for this job. The necessary capital was granted by the National Forestry Administration in form of a loan without interest.

ASSAY OF ONGOING USDA RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

The OSSA is conducting an assessment of ongoing/research and education in programs relating to small-scale agriculture. The assessment is intended to provide a new and accurate financial and human resource account for measuring the USDA/State commitment to small-scale agriculture.

To enhance the scope and augment the validity of the study, the OSSA held in October and November, 1988 four regional seminars (Southern, Atlanta, GA; Northeast, Baltimore, MD; Western, Portland, OR; and North Central, Kansas City, MO) to discuss the research and education current and future needs of small-scale agriculture with recognized "experts" in the field. The various panel seminars by all accounts were very successful and much useful "first hand" knowledge was obtained.

ALIVE AND KICKING

The third annual "Small Farmers Gathering" was held October 15-16, 1988 in Centralia, MO. Over 3,000 people attended and one of the special features of the gathering was the assemblage of nearly 150 draft horses and mules. There were demonstrations of various good teams doing their thing--plowing, disking and grinding grain by mule power. The many country and city people attending the gathering came together; it was unity in the countryside.

And the mule has not been forgotten in America! October 25, 1988 was National Mule Day and the National Agricultural Library (NAL), Beltsville, MD held a symposium "The American Mule: Yesterday and Today" to open a formal exhibit in the NAL lobby. The special exhibition was curated by C. Ray Brassieur of the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 13-15, 1989 - The 29th Ohio Roadside Marketing Conference. For registration contact Mr. Kelso L. Wessel, Coordinator, ORMC, Dept. of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, 2120 Fyffe Rd., Columbus, OH 43210-1099. Telephone (614) 292-6413.

January 16-19, 1989 - Illinois Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Convention and Trade Show, 12th Annual Meeting. Prairie Capitol Convention Center, Springfield, IL. Telephone Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau at (800) 356-7900 (in Illinois) or (800) 545-7300 (outside Illinois).

January 31, February 1-2, 1989 - New York State Direct Marketing Conference, Niagara Falls, NY. Contact - Ken Silsby, Farm and Home Center, 4487 Lake Avenue, Lockport, NY 14904. Telephone (716) 433-2651

February 2-5, 1989 - National Direct Marketing Conference and Farm Conference '89. The Oakland Hyatt Regency, Oakland, CA. Contact - Michele Woods, Direct Marketing Programs, California Dept. of Food and Agriculture, 1220 N. Street, P.O. Box 942871, Sacramento, CA 94271-0001. Telephone (916) 445-5294.

February 4, 1989 - Colorado Organic Producer's Association (COPA) Annual Meeting, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO. Contact - Helen Davis, Colorado Department of Agriculture, Denver, CO 80203. Telephone (303) 866-3561.

February 5, 1989 - Information Exchange Groups for Professionals in Small-Scale Agriculture. Natchez Trace Room, Opryland Hotel, Nashville, TN. Contact - J.F. Tisdale, Southern Rural Development Center, P.O. Box 5446 Mississippi State, MS 39762. Telephone (601) 325-3205.

February 10-11, 1989 - Great Northern Botanicals Association Annual Meeting and Buyer's Forum. Student Union-Building, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT. Contact - Don Dwyer (406) 837-5776.

February 12-15, 1989 - 1989 Annual Meeting of the North American Strawberry Growers Association Inc., Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI. Contact - Ed Burns, P.O. Box 1245, Tarpon Springs, FL 34688. Telephone (813) 937-4109.

March 8, 1989 - Illinois Strawberry School, Ramada Hotel, Mt. Vernon, IL. Contact - J. W. Courter, Dixon Springs Agricultural Research Center, Simpson, IL 62985. Telephone (618) 695-2444.

April 25-28, 1989 - National Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Symposium/Workshop. Rivera Hotel, Las Vegas, NV. Contact - E. H. Glass, Department of Entomology, NY State Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, NY 14456. Telephone (315) 787-2337.

USDA/CSRS/SPPS

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